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THE  
*Reasonable Communicant :*  
OR, AN  
EXPLANATION  
Of the DOCTRINE of the  
**Sacrament**  
OF THE  
LORD'S SUPPER,  
In all its Parts, from the  
COMMUNION SERVICE.

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In a DISCOURSE between a  
*Minister* and one of his *Parishioners*.

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By *W. FLEETWOOD*, D. D.  
Late Lord Bishop of ELY.

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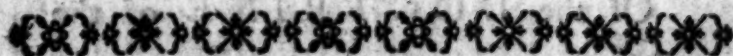
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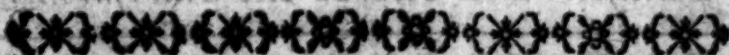
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MDCC LXXI.



**N. B.** This Book is printed in a handsome Manner, on a large Letter and good Paper; and to it is annexed an Office for the Holy Communion, consisting of Preparatory Prayers, Meditations, Devotions and Thanksgivings, before, at, and after the Holy Sacrament.—The Whole drawn up according to Bishop Fleetwood's own Plan.

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T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**H**AVING been often called upon, both by my Office and the Rules of Charity, to assist good People, who were willing to understand and to do their Duty, in their Preparation for the *Sacrament*; I never failed of explaining the latter Part of the *Church-Catechism*, which relates to the *Lord's Supper*, by the *Communion Service*, and recommending it to their frequent Reading, and most serious Meditation; as well knowing that it contained the *Whole* of what the Church of *England* requires from her Communicants, both to understand and practise. And being moreover assured, that whoever will speak on this Subject with *Authority* and *Certainty*, must speak from *thence*; it being the public and allowed Explanation of that Doctrine, and the very *Standard* by which all other Explanations are to be measured, and accordingly to be either admitted or rejected.

To save myself the Labour of very frequently repeating these Things, I thought of putting them together, in as short and plain a Method as I



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could, and printing them, that I might have them to offer easily to such as should think fit to advise with me on these Occasions.

While I was thus digesting these Things, and putting them in Order, there occurred to my Mind (and naturally, I thought) some few Particulars, which, although they are not absolutely necessary to the understanding the Doctrine of the Sacrament, yet I believed they might prove useful to some sort of Christians; and therefore I thought it not unreasonable to intermix them in their proper Places; having found in the Course of my Experience, that many People had made the same Objections, and asked the same Questions; and therefore, that others also might be glad enough to find such Answers and Solutions as are here given.

The Reader will undoubtedly find this little Book to differ from many that are written on the same Subject; and it would be strange if it should not, for they differ much from one another. But I still refer to the *Standard*, in all Things where that speaks. And where that is silent, I refer to the Reasonableness of what is said by me; having had my Eye continually upon the Holy Scriptures, and not being destitute of Authorities for most Particulars, if there had been either Need, or Use of producing them.

Some, it is likely, will conclude, I have made the Duty seem too *easy*; and thereby have encouraged both the careless and the over-busy People of the World, to come to the Lord's Table with less Preparation than otherwise they would have done. To these People I only say, that I intended nothing like it; and have no Reason to think that any such Thing will follow. Men, I hope, will always come to the Sacrament, *with a true peni-*

*tent*



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*text Heart, and lively Faith*; and then, I am sure, they will come *worthily*. And the easier this is to be done, it is so much the better, certainly. He who represents a general Duty *difficult*, does his Master neither Honour nor Service: but discourages many from attempting to perform it, who would both attempt it, and perform it, were it but represented easy in any measure. And it is demonstrable, that no Duty suffers more on this Account, than that of coming to the *Lord's Table*; abundance of People not daring to approach it, for the imaginary Difficulties they think attend it, to one who comes with light and mean Apprehensions of it. However, he who represents Things fairly, can neither be said to make the Duty *easy*, nor *difficult*, but to shew it as he finds it.

I have not adventured to subjoin any *Devotions, Prayers or Meditations*, to this little Book; as well because I intended it not for the *Church*, but the *Closet*: as also, because there is such Plenty of Books of that kind, as may very well spare any one else that Labour: the Generality, indeed, of Writers on this Subject having rather made it their Business to raise the *Devotion*, than inform and settle the *Understanding* of their Communicants; in which Thing I found no manner of need to follow them.

The *Instructions* at the End, or *Rules of Behaviour* during the Solemnity, are to recommend themselves to the Reader by their pure Reasonableness and Fitness: for there is no Authority, besides the *Rubric*, in such Matters, that can enjoin any Thing. But I have always thought, that nothing external could be more edifying and useful, on these Occasions, than a grave, discreet, and proper Carriage; and have therefore insisted

much on some such Particulars, as I thought would be most serviceable to that Purpose: For the Truth of it is, we are such weak and imperfect Creatures, that very little Matters unfix our Attention, disturb our Prayers, and strangely discompose our Minds, in the Midst of our most serious Performances; and therefore, every one is to be careful, that he neither disorder himself, or Neighbour, by any thing absurd, unusual, or indecent.

Having given the Reader an Account of these Things, I must desire him, in any doubtful Case, not to take my bare Word, but to consult some faithful and discreet *Spiritual Guide* upon the Matter; that he may either see Reason to alter his Judgment quite or stand the more confirmed in it.



THE



## T H E

*Reasonable Communicant.*

*Par.* **I** HAVE, Sir, thought upon your last Words,  
 " That it behoved every Christian of Age  
 " and Understanding to come to the *Lord's*  
 " *Supper*, or to provide themselves with such an Ex-  
 " cuse as they think will satisfy Christ the Judge, when  
 " he shall ask them at the last Day, Why they did  
 " not comply with that command of his, the Night  
 " before he died, to *Do this in Remembrance of Him?*"  
 And the more I think upon it, the less able I am to  
 find out any such Excuse, as, I believe, will satisfy  
 that Judge. And therefore, I resolve to lose no more  
 Time in looking out for an Excuse of my Neglect and  
 Disobedience, but to set about what I believe my  
 Duty, and make Excuses needless. I am, indeed,  
 of Age more than sufficient; but being of a slow Un-  
 derstanding, and of a very mean Capacity, though I  
 have read much upon this Subject, I intreat you, in  
 your Instructions, to consider me as one very ignorant,  
 and bringing nothing with me but a Desire to learn,  
 and to do what I ought to do.

*Min.* I am very glad it hath pleased God to bring  
 to your Mind what I said, and to inspire you with so  
 wholesome a Resolution, as this of setting about your  
 Duty is. Assure yourself, you would have lived and  
 died without Excuse, had you neglected it. For this  
 Command of Christ being given to none but the Apo-  
 stles in Person, will either oblige none else, or neces-  
 sarily take in all Christians of Age and Understanding:  
 And that the Apostles understood it to oblige all other  
 Christians, as well as themselves, appears from the



Practice immediately following (which is always the best Expounder of a Law) which was, that the Apostles, and other Christians, met together in Religious Assemblies, and partook alike of the Lord's Supper. And that this was the Custom of the Churches, where the Apostles were not present, appears from the History of the *Corinthians* abusing this Sacrament, 1 *Cor.* chap. xi. as also from the Argument which St *Paul*, from the Christians communicating in Bread and Wine, frames, 1 *Cor.* x. in order to deter them from eating Things offered to Idols. Now this Communicating being made by St *Paul*, in that Argument, a Badge of their belonging to Christ, as the eating Things offered to Idols was the Token of an Idolator, it is plain he supposes all Christians obliged, at Time and Place convenient, to communicate. And if it had not been, in his Time, the Custom for Christians to come to the Lord's Table, his Argument had had no Force at all in the tenth Chapter. And if it had not been their Duty to come to the Sacrament, he should not in the eleventh Chapter have reprov'd them for coming in so irreverent and disorderly a Manner, but have forbidden their coming at all; for why should they commemorate Christ's Death *unworthily*; and to their great Peril, since there was no Obligation on them to commemorate it at all? Since therefore he bids them *examine themselves*, and come, he knows it absolutely necessary that they should come; and this Necessity could only arise from Christ's Command, given to the Apostles at his last Supper, and repeated to St *Paul* himself by Christ. From all which you may see, that all Christians are certainly obliged to come to the Lord's Table; and that no one should exempt himself from obeying this Command, whom Christ hath not exempted: Let them, therefore, look well to it, who seldom or never partake of the Lord's Supper. God be thanked, this will be no longer your Fault; and I dare say, it must have been a Trouble to you, to have been negligent so long. As to the Instructions you require, I know it is my Duty to do you all the Service I can in that Particular; but what I shall give you

you will be none of *mine*, but the *Church's*, of which you are a Member. I do not think I have Authority enough to say much of my own Head in this great Matter: nor will you be any Loser by that, for the Church will say enough, and what it says will be authentical, and of great Weight; which is more than I can promise of any private Man, any farther than he agrees with the Church in her Public Offices. And for your Understanding, I would not have you distrust it over-much, for the Matter we are upon requires no Subtilty or fine Parts; as you may well imagine, when you consider, that this Command of coming to the Lord's Table, obliges *All* Christians, High and Low, Rich and Poor, Learned and Ignorant; and therefore, must needs be plain and easy to the meanest Capacities. If therefore you shall know, 1st, *What a Sacrament is.* 2dly, *Why the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained.* 3dly, *What are the Benefits whereof we are made Partakers thereby.* And lastly, *What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper;* you will know all that you need to know, and all that the Church requires of you. And this you are to learn from the Church Catechism, and the Communion-Service; which, as it is the plainest and the easiest, so it is, doubtless, the safest Method of Instruction, and what you may most depend upon.

*Par.* I see a great deal of Reason in what you say, and a great deal of Security in following the Church's Directions; and will therefore seek for no other Help for Information of my Judgment and Understanding; though I may perhaps have Recourse to other Helps for expressing my Wants in Prayer, and raising my Devotion.—Let me therefore know, 1st, “What you mean by the Word *Sacrament*?”

*Min.* “I mean an outward and visible Sign of an inward and spiritual Grace, given unto us: Ordained by Christ himself, as a Means whereby we receive the same, and a Pledge to assure us thereof.” So that there are two Parts in a Sacrament; an outward and visible Sign, something that you can see, and something signified, which you cannot see; that is to

say, *an inward and spiritual Grace*, which God gives to us. And this outward and visible Sign is instituted and *ordained by Christ himself*, as a Means by which we receive this inward and spiritual Grace; it is the Instrument or Conduit, through which the Grace of God is conveyed and derived to the Souls of Men. And moreover, this outward and visible Sign is as a *Pledge* to assure us of that inward Grace; that is to say, we are as sure to receive this inward and spiritual Grace, if qualified as Christ requires, as we receive the outward and visible Sign. And since it is the same Christ who instituted the outward Sign, who is to bestow this inward Grace, the duly partaking of the outward Sign must needs be as a Pledge to assure us that we shall receive that inward and spiritual Grace. Thus, for Instance, in the Sacrament of Baptism there are Two Things. First, "The outward and visible Sign or Form, which is Water, wherein the Person is baptized, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," instituted by Christ. 2dly, "The inward and spiritual Grace, which is a Death unto Sin and a New Birth unto Righteousness; for being by Nature born in Sin, and the Children of Wrath, we are, *by being baptized*, made the Children of Grace." Here the outward and visible Sign, or the being baptized in Water in the Form prescribed, is the *Means* by which the Party baptized (if rightly qualified by Faith and Repentance) receives the Grace of having his Sins forgiven, and of being adopted one of God's Children. And his being thus baptized, is as a *Pledge* to assure him of receiving the Forgiveness of his Sins, and being made a Child of God, and Partaker of all the Grace and Favour that belongs to the Relation of a Son.

*Par.* But may I not here enquire whether the *Death unto Sin*, and *New Birth unto Righteousness*, before-mentioned, do not intimate the Conditions upon *Man's Part*, on which he enters into Covenant with God in Baptism?

*Ans.* Every one indeed who is baptized, does thereby engage and stipulate, to die to Sin, and to live to God;



God; that is, to cease from Sin, and live a Life of Righteousness. But the Grace of Baptism is something bestowed and promised by God on his Part, and therefore *a Death unto Sin* does here signify the Pardon of past Sins to him who is duly baptized; and a *new Birth unto Righteousness*, is the Promise of God's Grace to assist the Baptized in living righteously for the Time to come. For every one who is duly qualified by Faith and Repentance to come to Baptism, and is duly baptized in the Matter and Manner prescribed by Christ, is actually forgiven all his past Sins, and in a State of Grace, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. And yet after Baptism, he is also obliged to die to Sin, and to live to God; to *crucify the old Man; continually to mortify all his evil and corrupt Affections; and daily to proceed in all Virtue and Godliness of Living*. We are by Nature born in Sin, and Children of Wrath, that is, under God's Displeasure; but being baptized, we are made Children of Grace; that is, our past Sins are forgiven, and we are put under God's Favour, and we engage in that Covenant to continue so; which cannot be but by dying to Sin, and living to Righteousness for the Time to come; which, without God's Grace, cannot be done by any of us.

*Par.* I am very well satisfied with what is said; and, if you please, would now come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: in which I suppose, there must be also Two Things, the outward and visible Sign, and the inward and spiritual Grace, the Thing signified. "What is the outward Part, therefore, or Sign of the Lord's Supper?"

*Min.* "Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received;" that is, to be eaten and drank by all such as come to his Table.

*Par.* "What is the inward Part, or Thing signified by this Bread and Wine?"

*Min.* "The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken, and received by the Faithful in the Lord's Supper."

*Par.* I can easily understand, that the Bread broken should signify the Body of Christ broken on the Cross; and

and that the Wine poured out, should signify the Blood of Christ shed at his Crucifixion: But in good truth, I cannot comprehend how this Body and Blood should be “ verily and indeed taken and received by the  
“ Faithful in the Lord’s Supper:” Those Words sound as if we were to eat the Natural Body, and drink the Natural Blood of Christ: I tell you, Sir, these Words puzzle all plain People; what must I do with them? and how must I understand them?

*Min.* The Church of *England*, in the last Rubric of the Communion Service, declares, that “ the Natural  
“ Body and Blood of Christ are in Heaven, and not  
“ here; it being against the Truth of Christ’s Natural  
“ Body, to be, at one Time, in more Places than one.” And therefore must declare, that we cannot eat and drink Christ’s Natural Body and Blood in the Sacrament: So that the *Real Presence*, maintained by the Church of *England*, is not the Presence of Christ’s Natural Body, but of his Spiritual and Mystical one; that is, the Real Presence of Christ’s invisible Power and Grace, so *in* and *with* the Elements of Bread and Wine, as to convey spiritual and real Effects to the Souls of such as duly receive them; as the Church is called the *Body of Christ*, because of his Spirit quickening and enlivening the Souls of Believers. And so the Church of Christ did heretofore pray, in the Prayer of Consecration,  
“ That the Spirit of God, coming down upon the  
“ Elements of Bread and Wine, might make them  
“ the Body and Blood of Christ, so that they who re-  
“ ceived them might be filled with the Grace of his  
“ Spirit.” Now the closest and the nearest Union of the Spirit of God with the Elements of Bread and Wine that can be imagined, can never make them the Natural Body and Blood of Christ; for if there be but One Natural Body of Christ, nothing else can be that Body: But the Descent of God’s Spirit *upon*, and Union *with* the Bread and Wine, may make those Elements as communicative of the Grace of Christ, and of the Efficacy of his Spirit, as his Natural Body was, whilst he lived upon the Earth: and this is what the Church requested in that Form of Prayer.

*Par.*

*Par.* What therefore would you have me believe distinctly of this Matter?

*Mis.* That, after the Consecration, such a Divine Power and Efficacy doth accompany the Holy Sacrament, as makes the Bread and Wine become the Spiritual and Mystical Body of Christ. And, to assure yourself, that the Church of *England* knows no Corporal Presence, nor any Change of the Bread and Wine into the Natural Body and Blood of Christ, you may observe, that in the First Exhortation of the Communion Service she tells us, "That God did not only give his Son Jesus Christ to die for us, but also to be our spiritual Food and Sustenance in that Holy Sacrament." Now Spiritual Food and Sustenance is, doubtless, the Food and Sustenance of the Spirit; because when it is asked in the Catechism, "What are the Benefits whereof we are made Partakers by this Sacrament?" the Answer is, "The strengthening and refreshing of our Souls, by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our Bodies are by the Bread and Wine." Whereas, if the Natural Body of Christ were in the Sacrament, what should hinder it from being as much the Natural Food and Sustenance of our Bodies, as any other Meat and Drink in the World? And so in the Third Exhortation, we are told, "That if with a true penitent Heart, and lively Faith, we receive that Holy Sacrament, then we spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ, and drink his Blood." Now to eat and drink *spiritually*, is a figurative Expression, and signifies, "the Feeding upon Christ's Body with our Heart, by Faith;" and so the Church explains it, when the Minister delivers the Bread to the Communicant, as you may see in that Place. We are therefore as verily and indeed filled with the Grace of Christ's Spirit by duly receiving these Elements, which he calls his Body and Blood, as we should be by eating and drinking his Natural Flesh and Blood; he calls the Bread and Wine his Body and Blood; and he makes them so to all Spiritual Intents and Purposes. And farther than this, there is, I think, no going, consistently with the Declarations of the Church of *England*, both in the  
Office



Office of Communion, and after it. To say the Bread and Wine, after Consecration, become the true Natural Body and Blood of Christ, is to destroy the very Nature of the Sacrament, and to make the *Sign* to be the *Thing signified*; for, if the Bread and Wine be transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ, then is the *Sign* lost, because there is no Bread nor Wine remaining: Which is not only contrary to Sense, but to the Definition of a Sacrament, which is made up of an outward and visible Sign, as well as of an inward and spiritual Grace. As therefore, in the Sacrament of Baptism, the Water remains still true and natural Water, after its Sanctification to the mystical washing away of Sin; so do the Elements of Bread and Wine remain still true and natural Bread and Wine, after the Consecrating of them to the End and Use appointed by Christ our Saviour. But as in Baptism, the Water, when sanctified to that peculiar Use, and used in the Manner prescribed by Christ, differs from other common Water, in that it is made, by Christ's Blessing and Appointment, the Instrument and Means by which he conveys Forgiveness of Sins past to the truly faithful Penitent, and regenerates him to Newness of Life for the Time to come: so in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the Elements of Bread and Wine, after Consecration, differ from other Bread and Wine, in that they are called the Body and Blood of Christ, and are the Means and Instruments by which Christ conveys the Grace of his Spirit to the worthy Communicant. And be assured, my Friend, that you can be no Loser by this; for Bread and Wine (or any thing else which it had pleased Christ to have chosen) may, by the Blessing and Appointment of God, be as communicative of Grace, as the true Natural Flesh and Blood of Christ itself can be: For even that (if you could indeed eat it with your Teeth) would no more communicate Grace, or any Blessing, to the Receiver, without such Institution and Appointment of God, than any other Food in the World that you can eat.

*Par.* The Sacraments, therefore, being Matters of mere Institution and Appointment, I am concerned to  
know

know no more either what they are, or how they operate, than it hath pleased God to reveal in the Holy Scriptures. And it will be sufficient, you say, to believe, that the consecrated Elements are both called and made the Body and Blood of Christ, so verily and indeed, to all Spiritual Intents and Purposes, as to convey to the faithful Receiver whatever Grace and Blessing Christ hath annexed to the due Performance of these Holy Rites. It is now Time to ask, "Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?"

*Min.* "For the continual Remembrance of the Sacrifice of Christ's Death, and of the Benefits which we receive thereby."

*Par.* I suppose then, that at this Time we are more especially to remember, that Christ died for our Sins; and that the Bread, which signifies his Body, and the Wine his Blood, do put us in mind, that his Body and Blood were broken and shed for us upon the Cross. This is a very easy Thing; is there any Thing else in it?

*Min.* No, nothing else? Christ, when he instituted this Sacrament, said only, *Do this in Remembrance of me*: So all the Evangelists tell us, and mention no other End of this Institution. And so St Paul, repeating what Christ said to himself, 1 Cor. xi. 24. 25. tells us—that of the Bread he said—*Take, eat; this is my Body, which is broken for you: This do in Remembrance of me.* And of the Cup—*This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in Remembrance of me.* And then explains himself in the Verse following after this Manner—*For as oft as you eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come.* After this it will be no Wonder, if the Church of England neither declares nor intimates any other End or Use of the Institution of the Sacrament, than the Commemoration of Christ's Death; for how should any one know the Will of Christ but by his Words? And what they are, you have seen. But now attend to what the Church says. 1st, In the First Exhortation before the Communion Office, "On such a Day, says her Officer, I purpose, by God's Assistance, to administer to all such as shall be religiously and devoutly disposed, the most comfortable Sacrament"

“ Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, to be  
 “ by them received, in Remembrance of his meritori-  
 “ ous Cross and Passion; whereby alone we obtain Re-  
 “ mission of our Sins, and are made Partakers of the  
 “ Kingdom of Heaven.” Then, in the Second Ex-  
 hortation. “ And as the Son of God did vouchsafe to  
 “ yield up his Soul by Death upon the Cross, for your  
 “ Salvation; so is it your Duty to receive the Com-  
 “ munion in Remembrance of the Sacrifice of his  
 “ Death, as he himself hath commanded.” And in  
 the Third Exhortation, thus: “ And to the end that  
 “ we should always remember the exceeding great  
 “ Love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ,  
 “ thus dying for us, and the innumerable Benefits  
 “ which by his precious Blood shedding he hath ob-  
 “ tained to us, he hath instituted and ordained Holy  
 “ Mysteries, as Pledges of his Love, and for a con-  
 “ tinual Remembrance of his Death, to our great and  
 “ endless Comfort.” And so in the Prayer of Consec-  
 ration;—“ Who did institute, and in his holy Gospel  
 “ command us to continue a perpetual Memory of  
 “ that his precious Death, until his coming again.”  
 And three or four Lines after — “ According to thy  
 “ Son our Saviour Jesus Christ’s holy Institution, in  
 “ Remembrance of his Death and Passion.” And  
 when the Minister delivers the Bread to each Commu-  
 nicant, he says, “ Take, and eat this, in Remem-  
 “ brance that Christ died for thee.” And of the Cup,  
 “ Drink this, in Remembrance that Christ’s Blood  
 “ was shed for thee.”

*Par.* Since then, the Scriptures, the Church Cate-  
 chism, and the Communion Office, speak of no other  
 End of Christ’s instituting the Sacrament, than for the  
 Remembrance of his Death, I need not be concerned  
 either to inquire after any other End, or to believe  
 there is any other, whatever private People may offer  
 in their Discourses on this Subject?

*Min.* You take me right: There is no other End  
 declared by Christ, nor by the Church of *England*, of  
 the Institution of the Sacrament, than to come to his  
 Table, to take and eat Bread, and drink Wine (made



to the faithful Receiver Christ's Body and Blood (in Remembrance of Christ's Death and Sufferings; but this must not hinder you from doing all that is previously necessary to qualify you to commemorate this precious Death worthily.

*Par.* That I apprehend: Nor must I commemorate this Death barely as the Death of Christ, but as he was a *Sacrifice for Sin*; that is, if I understand it right, his Life was offered up to God upon the Cross, for the Expiation of the Sins of the World, and for the Atonement of God's Anger; just as the Lives of Beasts were, under the *Mosaical* Dispensation, offered for the Expiation of such and such Offences, upon which the Party offending was acquitted of whatever legal Guilt he had contracted. When therefore I commemorate the Death of Christ, I must remember, not only that he died, but that his Life was offered up to God a Sacrifice, and was accepted of Him, for the Sins of the whole World. This the Scripture assures us of in many Places: and this the Church expresses in the Prayer of Consecration, thus; "That God, of his tender Mercy, gave his  
" only Son Jesus Christ to suffer Death upon the  
" Cross for our Redemption, who made there (by  
" his one Oblation of himself once offered) a full  
" perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Sa-  
" tisfaction, for the Sins of the whole World." This I understand, by commemorating Christ's Death as a Sacrifice, or the Sacrifice of Christ's Death; and I hope this is sufficient; for I do not care in how small a Compass my Belief lies, provided it be *all that is truly necessary*.

*Min.* You have read the Communion Service well, and made good Use of it; and indeed, you need to go no farther: For all you have to do is, to remember and believe that Christ died, and that his Life was offered up a Sacrifice to God, for the Forgiveness of the Sins of all the World, and was sufficient for that Purpose.

*Par.* But "What are the Benefits whereof we are  
" made Partakers by receiving this Sacrament?" For though I come to it, because commanded, and do there (as I am also bid) commemorate the Sacrifice of  
Christ's

Christ's Death; yet what Advantage is it so to commemorate Christ's Death?

*Min.* The Benefits of Christ's Death are numberless and inestimable; it is the Fountain and Foundation of all God's Mercies, which he either bestows on Men in this Life, or promises in the other. And, doubtless, the Benefits of duly commemorating his Death are also very great: and therefore the Church's Answer to this Question is,—“The strengthening and refreshing of  
“Souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our  
“Bodies are by the Bread and Wine.” The Death of Christ is as much the Life of the Soul, as Bread and Wine are the Life and Sustenance of the Body. Bread, you know, is the Staff of Life, and Wine is that which cheareth the Heart of Man, and supporteth his Spirit; and they are put here to signify the whole Sustenance of Man's Life: As therefore a Man's Body cannot be supported and maintained with Strength and Vigour, without the Sustenance of Bread and Wine; so does the Life of the Soul consist in Faith on the Son of God; and would without it languish away and die. These, you see, are figurative Expressions, and must be so, by reason the Soul cannot properly be said either to *eat* or *drink*. But it is easy enough to understand, that as Man's Body lives by Meat and Drink; so does his Soul by Faith in God, and Hope in his Promises; and that as when the Body is faint and languishing, it is supported and revived by Bread and Wine; so is the Soul of a poor penitent Offender (when fainting under the Weight of its Guilt) strengthened, refreshed, and quickened again to Life, by remembering what Christ hath suffered for his Sake, how he died to redeem his Soul, to make Satisfaction to God for all his Sins, and reconcile him to Him. And therefore, to commemorate the Benefits of Christ's Death, must needs be the Refreshment, Comfort, and Support of a Man's Spirit, and the very Life of his Soul. But you will have a fuller View of all these spiritual Advantages, by reading the second Prayer, after the Receiving of the Sacrament, wherein the Communicants give Thanks to God (by the Mouth of the Minister) “for that he  
“vouchsafes

“ vouchsafes to feed those, who have duly received  
“ these holy Mysteries, with the spiritual Food of the  
“ most precious Body and Blood of Christ, and doth  
“ assure them thereby of his Favour and Goodness to-  
“ wards them, and that they are very Members incor-  
“ porate in the mystical Body of his Son; which is the  
“ blessed Company of all faithful People; and are also  
“ Heirs, through Hope, of his everlasting Kingdom,  
“ by the Merits of the most precious Death and Pas-  
“ sion of his dear Son.” In which Words the Church  
numbers up the Benefits that accrue to the worthy Re-  
ceivers. 1st, They are fed with the spiritual Food of  
Christ's Body and Blood. 2dly, They are assured  
thereby of God's Favour and Goodness towards them.  
3dly, They are Members of Christ's Mystical Body,  
that is, the Church, of which Christ is the Head:  
And, 4thly, Heirs of Salvation. Now though we are  
made in Baptism Members of Christ, Children of God,  
and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven; yet was it  
for the Merit of Christ's Death and Sufferings, that  
God was pleased to enter into Covenant with us in  
Baptism, and thereby give us Right to all those Bene-  
fits and Privileges. And therefore we have seen, that  
the Sacrament was ordained for the Commemoration  
of the Sacrifice of Christ's Death, and for Commemo-  
ration of the Benefits that we receive by that Death:  
and the Commemoration of these Benefits are, in  
truth, the strengthening and refreshing of the Soul,  
as Peoples Bodies are refreshed by Bread and Wine.  
To think, remember, and believe, that by duly re-  
ceiving these blessed Elements of Bread and Wine we  
are fed with the spiritual Food of Christ's Body and  
Blood, that we are thereby assured of God's Favour,  
Members of Christ's Church, and Heirs, thro' Hope,  
of everlasting Salvation; to remember, I say, these  
Honours and Advantages, must strengthen and refresh  
the Souls of humble Sinners, as much as Bread and  
Wine can do their Bodies. You must bear with the  
Repetition of these Matters, in order to your better  
understanding them, and their being the better im-  
pressed on your Mind.

*Par.*



*Par.* I thank you, Sir, and perceive I am no Loser by the frequent inculcating of the same Thing. Let me now, if you please, give you a short Summary of what you have discoursed of, that you may see whether I have understood and taken you right. " I find myself  
 " indispensibly obliged, by Christ's Command, to come  
 " to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and I do not  
 " see what can excuse me from doing so, being of  
 " Age and Understanding, and having convenient Opportunity. When I come there, I am to do as Christ  
 " bad his Disciples do, take the Elements of Bread and  
 " Wine, and eat the one and drink the other, in Commemoration of Christ's Death. The Bread, I understand, is, by the Appointment of Christ, to signify  
 " his Body, and the Wine his Blood; and when I eat  
 " the Bread, I am to remember that Christ's Body  
 " was cruelly used, nailed to the Cross, wounded, and  
 " pierced. And when I drink the Wine, I am to remember, that his Blood was shed and poured out  
 " upon that Cross. This Death of Christ I am to look  
 " upon as an expiatory Sacrifice, which he offered up  
 " to God upon the Cross, for the Sins of all Mankind,  
 " and for mine in particular amongst the rest, if I take  
 " care to qualify myself as he requires. This Bread  
 " and Wine, thus blessed and consecrated to this particular Use, I am not, you say, to consider as common Bread and Wine; nor yet to think they are at  
 " all changed in their Nature; but to call them the  
 " Body and Blood of Christ, and to believe they will  
 " (if worthily received) convey to me the Benefits of  
 " Christ's Death and Passion." This *Virtual* Presence of Christ's Body and Blood I can understand, and it is *Real* as to all spiritual Intents and Purposes; for God, I am sure, can as well convey his Grace to my Soul, and make me a Partaker of the Benefits of Christ's Death by these Elements, which, being blessed, signify and represent his Body and Blood, as by his Natural Flesh and Natural Blood, if I could eat the one and drink the other. Farther than this, I am glad to hear, you think the Church of *England* does not go. But since all these great Advantages and Spiritual Benefits  
 accrue

accrue only to him who comes to this Table of the Lord, *duly and worthily prepared*, it is most necessary that I ask, in the last Place,—“What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?”

*Min.* “To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former Sins; stedfastly purposing to lead a new Life, have a lively Faith in God's Mercy thro' Christ, with a thankful Remembrance of his Death, and be in Charity with all Men.”

*Par.* A great Work, I assure you, if every Thing be considered particularly.

*Min.* Be not frightened; it is no more than what all Christians are always obliged to, as well when they come not to the Sacrament, as when they come to it.

*Par.* What is it, “truly to repent of all my former Sins?”

*Min.* I will tell you in the Words of the Church, in her First Exhortation. It is, “To examine your Life and Conversation by the Rule of God's Commandments: And whereinssoever you shall perceive yourself to have offended, either by Will, Word, or Deed, there to bewail your own Sinfulness, and confess yourself to Almighty God, with full Purpose of Amendment.” Nothing can possibly be plainer. You must bethink yourself how you have spent your Life past, and what Commands of God you have transgressed, and what you have neglected; what you have done, which was forbidden by God; and what you have not done, which was commanded. This, your Conscience (if you be in earnest) will, upon some short Reflection, bring to Memory: And for this, you must implore God's Mercy, and beseech him, for Christ's Sake, to forgive you.

*Par.* Is it enough then, to confess my Sins to God, and to be unfeignedly concerned and sorrowful for having offended Him? Is this to have repented?

*Min.* You must remember, that our Sins are against God, and against our Neighbour: And that Repentance implies not only *Sorrow* for Sin, but an Endeavour to *undo*, as far as we can, whatever we have done amiss. Now in all Sins that are so done, as nothing of them

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them can be undone, nor any Amends made for them, there to confess them, and be sorry for them, is sufficiently to repent of them, because it is all that a Man can do; where a Man can do more, more will be expected from him: for Repentance is the undoing, as much as we can, what we have done amiss. And if you remember this, you will easily see what Repentance will suffice for almost all Sins. It is therefore for such Sins (whether against God, or Man, or both) as cannot be undone, or other Amends made for them, that the Church calls upon you "to bewail them, and  
" confess yourself to God, with full Purpose of Amend-  
" ment." But for other Offences, the Church directs you otherwise: "If (saith she) you shall perceive your  
" Offences to be such, as are not only against God,  
" but also against your Neighbours, then you shall re-  
" concile yourself unto them, being ready to make Re-  
" stitution and Satisfaction, according to the utmost of  
" your Power, for all Injuries and Wrongs done by  
" you to any other; and being likewise ready to for-  
" give others that have offended you, as you would  
" have Forgiveness of your Offences at God's Hands."

*Par.* But what if I am able to make no Restitution or Satisfaction at all, for the Injury I have done my Neighbour? Must I not come to the Sacrament, provided I acknowledge and confess my Sin to God, and promise, in my Mind, to make Amends, whenever I am able?

*Min.* Yes, certainly; for this is all the Repentance you can shew, under your Inability of making Satisfaction, and such a Resolution of being just and honest is sufficient, till you are able to put it in Execution.

*Par.* But supposing I have wronged a Man (as, for Instance, my Master, when I was his Servant, and trusted by him) by defrauding him of Goods, or Money, or any Thing valuable, and am now convinced of my Fault in doing so, and would make him Restitution if I could, but find I am not able; am I obliged to confess my Fault to him, before I come to the Sacrament? Does Repentance certainly include Confession to the *Party Injured*? The Case, I doubt, is common;



common; but I know it was my own Case, certainly; and what would you advise in it?

*Min.* If your Confession would do your Master, or any one else, any Service, I would not only *advise* it, but *enjoin* it to you. As for Example: If your Confession would shew your Master some particular Cases where his Servants, or others whom he trusts, may over-reach or defraud him, of which he is not aware, and understands not; there, you see your Confession would be of Use to him, and preserve him from others Injuries; and there, I would advise you to give him Information, that he may be more secure for the future. But this may be done underhand, and in Generals, without discovering yourself and your particular Frauds; because, as the Case may happen, such Discovery may do him no Service, and yourself much Mischief; and where no Good can come to the Party injured by a Confession, there I can see no need of it.

*Par.* May I also make Restitution, when I am able, without discovering my Name to the Party injured?

*Min.* You may, where the Injury done is fully satisfied by Restitution. As for Example—You have wronged such a one of Fifty Crowns, or to the Value of that Sum; the Injury here, is the Loss of so much Money; when therefore this Loss is made up, the Injury is removed; what Good would it do, to let the Party know who it was that wronged him? It might do you some Mischief; but I think it could do him no Service. If he suspected, and impleaded you at Law, and you were cast, you would be obliged to pay the Costs, and also to confess your Fault: because you would here clear your Adversary of false Accusation, and justify the Sentence of your Judges; which is a great Good to the Commonwealth.

*Par.* I see the Reason of what you say. But what was the other Case, where I should be obliged to confess my secret Fraud, though I could not at that Time make Restitution?

*Min.* If your Master did either publicly accuse, or very strongly suspect another Person, of doing him that Wrong, which you indeed did him: here you would

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would be obliged to clear that innocent Person, and free him from the Trouble and Injury of being falsely accused, or ill thought of; and also your Master would be freed from doing Injury, by falsely accusing, or unjustly suspecting, an innocent Person. Here you perceive, you would do Justice, and a great deal of Good, by your Discovery and Confession. But in Cases where no Good would come, but Mischief, by Confession of your Fault to the injured Party, there, I imagine, you may rest satisfied with Confession to God, and a Purpose of Restitution when you are able.

*Par.* I thought Confession had been always necessary; but I perceive, that where it would answer no good End, there it may be better spared, and without Sin. And therefore, let me put the Case, that I had polluted my Neighbour's Bed, and thereby injured three Parties most notoriously, *Him, his Wife, and my Own*; I must not, by this Rule, confess my Offence to them.

*Min.* Consider how much Mischief such a Confession might do to your Neighbour, and to your own Wife, and how little Good; and then you will see the Reason of the Rule. You would break the Peace and Happiness of two Families during their whole Lives; and, it may be, occasion a world of Mischief, from the Rage of Jealousy, and the Sense of such great Injuries. But mistake me not quite: I discharge you from confessing this Sin, either to the abused Husband, or to your own abused Wife: But I should lay it strictly on you to confess your Sin to your wicked Partner, and let her know (but with all Secrecy) how much you are concerned at your Transgression, and how sincerely you repent of it; and how you wish that she would do so too. This Confession I would never excuse you from, because it would be the likeliest Method to reclaim your sinful Partner, and undo the Mischief you have done; and truly I cannot see how you could repent in earnest of this Sin, without endeavouring to amend those whom you had been so instrumental in corrupting and undoing. And yet, I would excuse you even from this, if there were manifest Danger of the abused Husband's discovering the Falshood of his Wife, by  
your

your Confession. You see, I make the good Effects of Confession to be the Reason of making it; and therefore, where a greater Mischief would probably ensue from it, I cannot think it necessary. But it must then be made to God with greater Sorrow and Concern, if it be possible.

*Par.* But what if I should have sinned with common Prostitutes, and such as make a Trade of it, and who cannot be presumed ignorant of their Sin?

*Min.* The Case is somewhat otherwise there; and you must judge what likelihood there is of your Advice's succeeding with such People; for where you think they know their Way is sinful, and Counsel would have no effect, there I believe you are under no Obligation to give them Warning.

*Par.* The Sum therefore of what you say is, I think, this—That Confession and Restitution are the two external Tokens of Repentance,—and that the Rule and Measure of Confession to the Parties injured, is the Benefit and Good that would come by it. And the Rule and Measure of Restitution, is a Man's Ability of making it; so that where Mischief, and no Good would come by Confession, there I may repent without Confession, except to God. And where I am able to make no Restitution, there I may repent sincerely without it; and so may come to the Holy Sacrament, tho' I have done much Wrong and Injury. I wish I could supply these great Defects with a proportionable Share of Sorrow for my Sins: Can you tell what is proper to excite and raise it in me? for methinks I am too cold and unconcerned in this Matter.

*Min.* Endeavour to possess your Mind with a true Sense of the Heinousness of Sin, by considering, that God, who gave you Life and Being, and made you to be happy, is so displeased with Sin, that he resolves, for its Sake, not only to deprive you of the Happiness he intended for you, but to make you miserable beyond Expression, and that for ever, in the World to come. Think with yourself, who Christ the Lord was, and what he hath done and suffered to redeem you from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin; and you will have



another kind of Notion and Opinion of the Heinousness of Sin, than you can have from either its natural Turpitude, or from the Mischief it does in the World, though both those things are considerable. The whole Oeconomy of Christianity were a very strange Thing, unless Sin be the most heinous and abominable Thing that can be, before God. And therefore, when you would work in yourself a true Sense of the Heinousness of Sin, you must consider what is threatned to it, and what was done by Christ (the eternal Son of God) to save you from it.

*Par.* But this kind of Sorrow looks, methinks, rather like Sorrow for the *Effects* of God's Displeasure, which are *Loss* and *Punishment*, than Sorrow for the *Occasion* of that Displeasure, which is *Sin*. I own, Sir, I am very sorry for my Sins, when I consider what a Loser I am like to be by them, and how much I must suffer for them; but this is being sorry wholly for my own Sake.

*Min.* Be content, Sir, to do what you can, and as well as you can. It would take up a world of Time to persuade you to be exceeding sorrowful for your Sins, if your Sins would do you no Mischief, and procure you no Punishment.

*Par.* I think so too: But yet I have I know not what kind of Concern about me, that my Sorrow for Sin should proceed from no nobler and better Principle than the Fear of Punishment. And you must know much better than I, how all Sorts of Writers and Discourses decry the Repentance that proceeds from *Fear of Punishment*.

*Min.* Never think of setting up for a Man of Honour in Religion; trust to the Principles that God hath implanted in you; which are, Hope and Desire of Good, and Fear and Hate of Evil: and trust to the Rules that God hath set you in his Holy Word, to guide and direct yourself by. If God exhort you to do such and such Things, and promise you to reward your Performance of them with such and such Blessings, think with yourself, whether you may not set about those Actions in View of those Rewards, and for the Sake of those Blessings.

ings. If God prohibit you such and such Things, and tell you if you venture on them, he will punish you in this and that Manner; think with yourself whether you may not abstain from those Things, for fear of being so punished. These are plain Things, let them never slip out of your Mind. Nor let the Reverence for any Man (though it were *St Austin* himself) cause you to forget, that the Scriptures are made up of Promises and Threats; both which would signify nothing, if Men might not be moved by them, both to perform their Duty and obtain their Recompense, and to avoid both Guilt and Punishment. Now the same Promises being made to Repentance, which are made to Innocence and Obedience, and the same Threatnings denounced to Impenitence, which are denounced to Sin and Wickedness; it is evident, that Men may repent and turn to God, upon the same Principles by which they might have continued innocent and obedient; *viz* the Promises of Blessings, and the Threats of Miſchief, Pain, and Miſery; the one to excite their Hope, the other to awaken their Fear, and both to secure their Obedience. But if you can repent upon any better, or (as you call them) noble Principles, you may. I am only trying to shew you, that the Repentance proceeding from Fear of Punishment is safe, and will be acceptable with God, as being both natural and reasonable. I would have you only distrust that Fear that drives Men *from* their Duty, not that which urges them *to* it.

*Par.* I can, and do consider Sin as a Thing offensive before God, unworthy of myself, against my Reason and better Knowledge, and against express Command; and upon these Accounts I am somewhat troubled for having committed it; but this Sorrow, I confess, does not rise so high, as the Consideration of the Danger it exposes me to carries it; and therefore I am very glad to hear it is so justifiable and safe; and indeed, my Reason cannot disprove any Thing you have said in its Excuse: I will try henceforwards not to be discouraged by any one's Authority, affirming the contrary, if it be against Reason, and without Scripture; and in

the meantime, by the Grace of God, will try to fortify my Resolutions of Obedience and Repentance with the best Considerations I can, besides the Fear of Punishment. This Sorrow therefore, for having offended God, and Restitution where I am able to make it, and the Purpose of making Amends when I am able, will, I hope, include the whole of my Repentance for Sins past. The next Thing required of me is, you say, "stedfastly to purpose to lead a new Life;" and that refers to the Time to come. The Meaning of this is, I imagine, that I resolve in great Earnest to amend in all Particulars, wherein I have found myself, upon Examination, faulty. If I have stolen, I will steal no more; if I have been guilty of Lying, Slandering, Swearing, Blaspheming, Drunkenness, Intemperance, and Impurity; I will henceforward study to speak the Truth, and to avoid those Sins, and all Occasions of falling into them, and be continually upon my Guard against all the natural and usual Temptations to them. But what if, when I have made these Resolutions of falling no more into these Sins, I should be so wicked as to break them? What must I do then? I have Reason enough (God knows) to apprehend with Fear that this (which is so common) may be my Case; and with what Heart can one who has often resolved against his Sins, and often broke them deliberately, resolve again to keep them?

*Min.* Assure yourself, that you have nothing else to do in such a Case, but resolve again to keep those Resolutions you have often broken. The Breach of good Resolutions is certainly as pardonable as other Sins; and, if repented of, will certainly be pardoned: and therefore let not your frequent Failings discourage you from attempting, again and again, till you have gained your Point. Remember, there is nothing else to do; it is absolutely necessary you should resolve until your Resolutions take Effect.

*Par.* The third Thing requisite to the coming worthily to the Sacrament is, "To have a lively Faith in God's Mercies through Christ." What may the Meaning of that be?

*Min.* To



*Min.* To believe in great Earnest, that God was so exceedingly gracious and merciful to Mankind, that he gave his only Son to die for the Redemption of them, and to purchase the Pardon of all the Sins which they shall truly repent of and leave.

*Par.* Is it then absolutely necessary, that I, and every one who comes to the Sacrament, should certainly believe our Sins are forgiven upon Repentance?

*Min.* Not only at the Sacrament, but at any other time, whoever truly repents of his Sins shall certainly, for Christ's Sake, be forgiven. The Promise of Forgiveness of Sins is made by God, in Jesus Christ, to Repentance: If therefore you believe you have truly repented, you cannot possibly distrust the Performance of Covenants on God's Part. But it is possible you may distrust the Performance on your own Part, and the Truth and Sincerity of your Repentance; and then you cannot but distrust the Forgiveness of your Sins on God's Part. And that is not want of Faith, nor any Fault; for God only promises Forgiveness to Repentance. As far therefore as you distrust the Sincerity of your Repentance, so far you will distrust your Forgiveness; but you see that such a Distrust charges God with neither want of Truth, nor want of Mercy or Goodness, and therefore is no way faulty with respect to Him.

*Par.* But may I come to the Sacrament with a Distrust of the Truth of my Repentance? since in the *first* Exhortation I find these Words,—“It is requisite, “that no Man should come to the Holy Communion, “but with a full Trust in God's Mercy, and with a “quiet Conscience:”—Now tho' I have no Manner of Distrust of God's Mercy in general, yet if I cannot apply it to myself in particular, how should I have a *quiet Conscience*? And I can never apply God's Mercy to myself by Faith, whilst I distrust the Truth and Sincerity of my own Repentance.

*Min.* A *quiet Conscience* does indeed intirely depend upon the Opinion a Man has of his Repentance being sincere, and accepted of God: But because a Man may mistake his Case, a *quiet Conscience* is not always

a *secure* State with respect to God : For if a Man believe he has repented truly, and yet has not, he is never the nearer Pardon for thinking himself pardoned ; and if he be fearful he has not repented as he ought, he may yet have done so, notwithstanding his Fear, and consequently be pardoned of God, although he think he is not pardoned. So that it is plain, a Man may have a *quiet Conscience*, when he is really in great Danger ; and a *troubled Conscience*, when he is indeed forgiven, and secure of God's Favour ; and you can never believe that God will judge Men finally by their present Assurance or Despondency, but by the Truth and the Sincerity of their Repentance. The Church does not therefore understand by a *quiet Conscience*, a full Assurance in every one that his Repentance is so perfect and sufficient, that it must certainly be accepted of God : but such a Trust in God's Mercy, as that if a Man be duly qualified, he shall be certainly accepted of him, and forgiven. Some Mens Sins may be of such a Nature, as that they shall be sorely perplexed to understand what sort of Repentance is necessary to the obtaining Forgiveness ; and to this End they are called upon to advise with their Spiritual Guides, who are presumed to be able to instruct them, and set them right. Others are so overwhelmed with the Sense of their Sins, that they think they are too great for God's Pardon ; and these People are also advised to come to their Pastors, that they may learn the true Extent of God's Mercies in Jesus Christ, and what it is will qualify them for Forgiveness of their Sins. This is the *quiet Conscience* that the Church requires of her Communicants ; a Conscience well informed of the Nature of God's Promises and Threats, and of the Nature of Repentance, and of its own State and Condition.

*Par.* If I understand you right, you say, that the *Quiet* of a Man's Conscience depends upon his *Opinion* and *Perswasion* ; but his *Safety* and *Security* upon his *Practice* ; God accepts him, not according to what he *believes* of himself, but according to what he *does*, and truly *is*. If therefore, upon a serious Examination of  
my

my Life past, I find I am in earnest very much concerned for having offended God, and stedfastly purpose to do so no more, and by the Assistance of his Grace, resolve to lead a new and better Life for the Time to come; and firmly believe, that if I do so, God will, for Christ's Sake, accept of my Repentance, and enable me more and more to walk carefully before him. If I do thus, I may, you say, come to the Sacrament, although I may be still afraid of the Deceitfulness of my own Heart, and of the Truth and Sincerity of my Repentance, having often broken my good Resolutions before, and fallen again into my old Sins: This Fear and Doubting of myself will not prejudice me at all. The Thing that follows is, "To bear a thankful Remembrance of Christ's Death." That is, I suppose, that when I commemorate the Death and Sufferings of Christ in the Sacrament, I must lift up my Heart to God, and thank him for giving his Son Jesus Christ to die for me: I see a great deal of Reason for so doing; for if he had not died, I must have perished: I can therefore never remember his Death without remembering the Deliverance I obtained by it; and as I value that, so I shall certainly be thankful.

*Min.* You say right: Remember by what means you have escaped Death, and shall obtain Life and Happiness everlasting; and that will raise your Gratitude to God, who hath done so great Things for you. The Church lays mighty Stress upon this thankful Heart, as there is great Reason; and it will be to your Use to observe it.—In the First Exhortation she says, "It is our Duty to render most humble and hearty Thanks to Almighty God our heavenly Father, for that he hath given his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our Spiritual Food and Sustenance in that Holy Sacrament." And in the Third Exhortation: "Above all Things, you must give most humble and hearty Thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the Redemption of the World by the Death and Passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and Man."



And at the End of the same.—“ To him therefore, “ with the Father and the Holy Ghost, let us give “ (as we are most bounden) continual Thanks.” And in the Service the Priest exhorts,—“ Let us give “ Thanks unto our Lord God ;” and the People answer, “ It is meet and right so to do.”—So when the Bread is delivered,—Take and eat this in Remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him “ in thy Heart by Faith with Thanksgiving.” And when the Cup,—“ Drink this in Remembrance that “ Christ’s Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.” And in the Prayers after, we desire of God—“ that he “ would mercifully accept our Sacrifice of Praise and “ Thanksgiving ; and heartily thank him, for that he “ does vouchsafe to feed us, &c.” From all which Passages you will easily conclude the Lord’s Supper to be a *Feast of Joy and Gratitude*. And therefore I should be glad you would come to it without those Fears and dreadful Apprehensions, that appear so visible in the Countenance and Behaviour of many good devout People, who, I dare say, have no true Cause for such a Concern.

*Par.* I suppose it proceeds from their Humility, and a deep Sense of their Unworthiness ; and I hope there is no Harm or Danger in it ; it is as like to be my Case as any Body’s else.

*Min.* No, none at all ; I do not blame it by any Means : But if you will be advised by me, you shall endeavour to avoid it : for Fears distract the Attention, and the Mind is bewildred by them, and considers not the Work it is about so well as it desires to do. Think, that though you are a grievous Sinner, yet God is infinitely merciful ! Think, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him, should not perish, but be saved : And you are now commemorating that Death that has made Atonement for the Sins of the whole World. These Considerations may dispel all your Fears ; but if they do not, there is no Harm in them : It will be your Misfortune to want those Comforts that you might well have ; but there is neither Fault nor Danger in wanting them. The Heart is as

*securus*

secure, but not as *easy* under *Fear*, as under *Joy* and good Assurance. Repent but truly of your Sins, and leave them, and the Work is done; the rest is to be left to God, in whose good Hands you never will miscarry, how fearful soever you may be of your Condition.

*Par.* God be thanked, that our Safety depends not on our Hopes or Fears, but upon his infinite Goodness, accepting what he himself enables us to do. Let us come, if you please, to the *last Thing* requisite, and that is, "the being in Charity with all Men." What if my Friend prove false, injurious, and endeavour to undo me: must I still trust him, love him, and favour him as I used to do? What if he seek to take away my Estate, to hurt my Reputation, or assault my Person? Must I endure this patiently, and seek no Remedy, but treat him still in the friendly Manner I was wont?

*Min.* No, nothing of all this: Christianity obliges you to hate no Man; to do no Man any Injury; to seek no Revenge; nor to take any, though it might be done with Secresy and Safety: Nay, it obliges you to pray to God for the Forgiveness of such as may have injured you in the highest Measure, and obliges you to deny them nothing that is due in Justice, in Humanity, and Mercy. Their Enmity and ill Usage will never excuse you from doing them any Sort of good Turns that are due to them as Men or Christians: But this will not hinder you from defending yourself from any Injury or Violence, from recovering what is your own, nor from bringing upon them whatever Mischief the Laws will inflict upon Transgressors. Christianity will not hinder you from breaking off Friendship with one who hath shewed himself unworthy of it: much less will it require you to continue him in that Confidence and Trust he has heretofore been in, but forfeited by Falshood and ill Usage. In a Word, you must not *hate*, but you may *dislike* any one that injures your Reputation, Fortune, or your Person. You may cease your Friendship, but not your Readiness to do all good Offices: If you have injured any one, you must be reconciled and make Amends; and if any one has injured you, you must pray to God to forgive them, and

so forgive them yourself, as to return them no Evil for Evil, nor take any Advantage against them to their Prejudice. And if your Adversary be unreasonable, and will not be reconciled to you, it is enough that you desire it, and shew yourself disposed to it. It would be difficult and endless to tell you what you should do in as many Cases as may easily happen; if you find yourself at a stand, you had best communicate your Case to some prudent and good spiritual Guide, who will readily tell you what is to be done in the Matter. Remember only, that to be on the forgiving side is Wisdom, and Pleasure, and Superiority; it is to do bravely, and to be a good Christian.

*Par.* And this, you say, is all I have to do.

*Min.* You see the Catechism says so; and the first Exhortation before the Communion says so. And so does the third, which is always read—"Judge therefore yourselves, Brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord—Repent you truly for your Sins past—Have a lively and stedfast Faith in Christ your Saviour—Amend your Lives—and be in perfect Charity with all Men—so shall you be meet Partakers of those holy Mysteries." And when this exhortatory Prayer is done—the Church begins again—"Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your Sins—and are in Love and Charity with your Neighbours—and intend to lead a new Life, following the Commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy Ways—Draw near with Faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your Comfort." And, I pray, observe that there is nothing *new* required of you, but what you were before obliged to, by virtue of your baptismal Covenant: And whether you receive the Sacrament or no, you must repent, amend, trust in God's Mercies, and live in Love and Charity with all Men; you must do them *always*, and you are called upon especially to do them *now*.

*Par.* You will now give me Leave to ask you a few Questions in the general, and I shall make an End of this Trouble. How much Time must I take to come to the Sacrament, prepared, as you have been describing?

*Min.*



*Min.* No certain Time can be assigned for that; and I would not have you scrupulous about it; since this is the first Time, you shall do well to examine your Conscience thoroughly, and look carefully back into your Life past, and see wherein you have been faulty or neglectful; consider especially the Sins of your Inclination, and those to which your particular Calling and Way of Living expose you most; consider well the Temptations that draw you to them; that you may resolve with good Assurance against them for the Time to come, as well as truly repent of what is past. Do this very well at first; and then a sober, virtuous, and religious Life, will keep you constantly prepared, and fit to come to the Lord's Table. You may take as much Time as you please to prepare yourself beforehand, by Reading, Prayer, and Meditation; but I dare not say, that this or that Portion of Time is so necessary to it, as that you shall offend if you spend it not in those good Exercises. The Church has made no such Rules, but supposes, that if you live like a good Christian, a little Time will fit you for the Sacrament. And truly, as you are a Man of Business, do you but say your Prayers constantly, live virtuously, and exercise your Calling honestly and conscientiously, and I do not see, but you may be in your Shop on *Saturday*, and be a good Communicant on *Sunday Morning*. To be heartily humbled before God for our Sins past, is an *Act of the Mind*. To resolve stedfastly to live better for the Time to come, is an *Act of the Mind*. To believe that Christ died for our Sins, and to be thankful to God for that infinite Mercy, are *Acts of the Mind*. And so it is, to forgive all that have injured us. All these preparatory Things are *Acts of the Mind*. and quickly performed. And therefore, take but Care to live well, and you shall always be duly prepared to come to the Communion. And when you consider, how frequently the primitive Christians went to the Sacrament, and yet were *Lawyers, Tradesmen, Merchants*, and followed other Employments, you will conclude, that an innocent and virtuous Life must fit one for the Sacrament; without a *Week's*, a longer or a shorter Sequestration  
from

from Company or Business. I do not say this to blame any one who takes these Courses before the Sacrament; for sometimes it is necessary, and sometimes good and fitting: But that you should not think yourself always obliged to take the same Course, or abstain from the Sacrament, because you have not had that Time to spend in holy Exercises. It is a Misfortune, that one can give no Rules that will fit *all* Christians; and that the best Rules will hurt some or other, if closely followed. Discretion is the best Director in the World.

*Par.* Would you have me come to the Sacrament *Fasting*, or may I do otherwise?

*Min.* If you consider the Institution, nothing of that kind is necessary, for it was instituted after *Supper*. Nor has the Church of *England* made any Rule about it. Where, therefore, neither the Laws of God, nor those of our Superiors have obliged us, we must use our Prudence, and do what we find best. If you find that *Fasting* makes you more devout and serious, and gives you a better frame of Mind, you will certainly chuse to go to the Sacrament *Fasting*. Or if it be indifferent, and you are much the same whether you fast or not, and find it makes no Change at all in you, then you will chuse to fast in Decency, and with regard to ancient Practice. But if you have by Custom contracted such a Habit of eating or drinking some light Matter every Morning, that you shall be uneasy or disordered without it, then you will chuse to do as you used to do; because the Purposes of *Fasting* (which are to raise the Mind to God, and put it into a better Frame) are better answered by moderate Refreshment, than by wholly abstaining: I do not suppose that any one makes a full Meal in the Morning, that is not going to strong Labour, much less upon *Sunday*. And I take the Meaning of your Question to be, Whether you may eat or drink *never so little* on the Morning you come to the Sacrament? And to that I say, that neither God nor the Church has appointed the contrary: But yet I would *advise* it, where the Inconvenience of doing it is none; but not advise it, if there be any Inconvenience in abstaining. Only remember,

ber, that whether you abstain or not, you do it without Scruple yourself; and without censuring what another Person does, tho' contrary to what you do. Do in this, and in all other indifferent Cases, what you believe will tend most to your Spiritual Edification yourself, without Regard to what other People do.

*Par.* Will you give me any particular Directions how to behave myself during the Solemnity?

*Min.* When the *Offertory* begins, open your *Common-Prayer Book*, and with your *Eye* (not *Voice*) read along with the Minister, and make what short Application you can to yourself of what is read; there you will find you are reminded of being charitable in general, to all that stand in need; and in particular, of being just to those who are your Spiritual Guides; and giving them, at least, what the Laws and Customs of the Place have allotted them. And if you find you have been wanting, either in this Charity or Justice, you will resolve to make up those Defects for the Time to come; for assure yourself, you will be highly unjust, if you detain from them what is their Due, both in Law and Conscience, as much as any Debt is due to yourself. When these Sentences are over, then follows the *Prayer for the whole State of Christ's Church*, with which you must be sure to join in Heart and Spirit; and never pretend to use any other Prayers or Meditations of your own, or out of any other Book, whilst the Minister is praying the Prayers of *the Church*; for these are the best and properest for the present Purpose; and you must join with the Congregation in their Attention, and say the *Amen* with them, that you may reap the Advantage of that common Fervency, with which those Prayers fly up to God: When this Prayer is done, then follows the *Exhortation* (which I have still called the *third Exhortation*) to which you must most seriously attend, for it is full of excellent Information and Instruction: It shews you the great Benefits of coming *worthily* (that is, *with a true penitent Heart, and lively Faith*) unto this Holy Sacrament; and the great Danger of coming *unworthily*, that is, without repenting of your Sins, and without trusting in God's Mer-



cies through Christ. And pray remember, that there is no other Sense of the Words *worthily* and *unworthily* than coming *with* or *without* Faith in Christ, and sincere Repentance of Sin; and that whoever comes *worthily*, that is, repenting truly of his Sins, and believing that God, for Christ's Sake, will certainly forgive all such as repent and leave their Sins. —Whoever comes thus, comes *worthily*; and whoever comes *worthily*, receives the *Benefits of Christ's Body and Blood*, and *dwells in Christ, and Christ in him*; and *is one with Christ, and Christ with him*; whatever those Phrases signify, and whether you understand them thoroughly or no. And to your Comfort, moreover, whoever comes *worthily* escapes all those Dangers and Mischiefs, whatsoever they be, that are expressed by “—being guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour—eating and drinking our own Damnation—not considering the Lord's Body—kindling God's Wrath against us—and provoking him to plague us with divers diseases, and sundry Kinds of Death.” These are hard Things, all of them, and some of them hard to be understood; but whatever they signify, however grievous and hazardous they are to the Souls and Bodies of Men—they are all avoided and escaped by coming *Worthily*, that is, by Faith in Christ's Merits, and repenting of our Sins. And therefore, if there were a thousand more such terrible Expressions (as I could wish there were fewer than there are) let them not frighten you, or give you any Trouble; *Repent and believe*, and all is well. When this and the next Exhortation are ended, you come to the *Confession of Sins*, in which you must join with the Minister both in Heart and Voice, for you are much concerned in it;—But when the *Absolution* (which is next to it) begins, then hold your Peace, and attend to the Minister with all your *Heart*. The Custom is, in some Places, for the People to say a soft *Amen* at the End of every Sentence; and there is nothing indecent in that Practice. But for any one to repeat the *Absolution* Word for Word with the Minister, is so absurd, and shews such Ignorance, that one would wonder any one should fall into that Practice.

*Absolution,*

*Absolution* is the Work of God's Minister, and belongs to him alone, in God's Name. The People's Part is to be *silent* and *attend*, and to say nothing but a most earnest *Amen* to that excellent Prayer. And, pray, believe me once for all, that nothing fixes the Attention like Silence; and let me warn you to observe in all your public Prayers, that you join with the Minister where you are bid, and at all other Times be *silent*; attend and make it your own, by saying a hearty *Amen*. The observing Order and Decency in Prayers, tends much to Edification: whereas the contrary begets Distraction, and disturbs both yourself and your Neighbours. It offends devout and understanding People mightily, to hear Men and Women say their Prayers absurdly and indecently, holding their Tongues where they should speak and join, and joining with the Minister aloud, where they should only hearken, and say *Amen*: But what can be more improper, than to hear them promiscuously *absolve* themselves and one another, and taking the Priestly Office on them, in a Part of it which is one of the most distinguishing he has? When the *Absolution* is over, attend most diligently to the *Sentences* of *Scripture* which the Minister is to read; and when he bids you *lift up your Heart to God*, you must be sure not only to do it in Word but in Deed, and great Earnest. When the Prayer of *Consecration* is over, (and not before) you will have some Time before the Bread and Wine are brought to you, which you must employ as well as you can, either in Prayer, or reading something proper to meditate on on that Occasion; and to this Purpose, you may furnish yourself out of some good Book of Devotion. But be not much discouraged, if you cannot fill up all that Space with regular Devotion, or with intense Meditation; do as well as you can, remember your own Offences with as much Sorrow as you can, and the Mercies of God to you in Jesus Christ, with as much Love, and Joy, and Gratitude; resolve in earnest to amend in what Particulars you find yourself most faulty; and ask of God the Grace and Power to put these good Resolves in Execution; and that the Merits of this saving Sa-

crifice,

crifice, which you are now commemorating, may be extended and applied to you, in the Forgiveness of your Sins, and all other Benefits of Christ's Passion. Recommend to God's Mercy your Parants, and Relations, Friends, and all the World: Do any thing that is good and proper to fill up the Time, and employ your Thoughts, till the Minister comes to you, to give you the consecrated Bread and Wine.

*Par.* And then, I suppose, you would have me raise my Devotion to the highest Pitch I can?

*Min.* Yes, I would have you very intent upon what you are about: But, take good heed, lest, while you are striving to raise your Heart, you be not lost and bewildered. Strive rather for a serious and composed Mind; let your Devotion be rather *regular and equal*, than *exalted and transported*: Attend gravely to what the Minister says; and when he has repeated that excellent Prayer.—“The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy Body and Soul unto everlasting Life—” be sure you say softly a most hearty *Amen*: For is not that the Thing you come for and desire? When he has said,—“Take, and eat this, in Remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy Heart by Faith, with Thanksgiving—” take it, and whilst you are eating it, make some such Prayer as this—*Grant, O Lord, that the Sense of this thy infinite Mercy, shewed to Man in so much Misery, may never depart from my Mind! Let me from henceforth, die to all my Sins, and my corrupt Affections, and live alone to Righteousness and Virtue! I steadfastly believe thou diedst upon the Cross, to save me from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin; O give me but the Grace to walk with a thankful honest Heart before thee! Accept of my imperfect Sorrow and Repentance, imperfect Faith, imperfect Resolutions; and let the precious Merits of my Lord supply the rest, and make up what thou seest is wanting!* When the Minister delivers the Cup, and says—“The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy Body and Soul to everlasting Life—” be sure you say *Amen*; for there it is most proper, and there it was formerly placed.

When



When he has said "*—Drink this, in Remembrance*  
*" that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be*  
*" thankful"*—take it, and drink very moderately, re-  
 garding neither Thirst nor Pleasure in that Draught.  
 And after you have done, you may make some such  
 short Prayer, as you did after the Bread—*O let my*  
*Soul be washed and cleansed in the Blood of Jesus, that*  
*was shed for me ! and let me never be unmindful of this*  
*Mercy, but give thee Thanks, not only with my Lips, but*  
*Life : by giving up myself to thy Service, and walking*  
*before thee in Holiness and Righteousness all my Days, thro'*  
*Jesus Christ my Lord : to whom, with thee, O Father,*  
*and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, now and*  
*for ever !* But let me remind you, that you do not  
 pretend to repeat, either aloud or softly, the Words  
 which the Minister uses in delivering the Bread and  
 Wine ; your Business is to attend soberly to what he  
 says, and to say *Amen*. I tell you this because an  
 idle Custom has prevailed, of Peoples repeating what  
 the Priest says, to the Disturbance of the Priest, and  
 to the Hindrance, I dare say, of their own Devotion,  
 which would be furthered by a grave and silent At-  
 tention, which I take all Occasions to recommend to  
 you. And that your Mind may be employed whilst  
 the rest are communicating, you will chuse to say some  
 good Prayers, or read some short Discourse, seasonable  
 and proper ; and if that do not hold out to the End,  
 you may listen to the Minister delivering the Bread  
 and Wine to the Communicants, and say a hearty  
*Amen* to each of them ; for that is praying for the  
 greatest Blessing God can bestow upon them—the *Pre-*  
*servation of their Body and Soul to ever-lasting Life.*  
 And when all have received, and the Minister returns  
 to his Prayers, be sure you be not unready to join with  
 him ; nay, though you should not have ended your  
 private Devotions, yet break them off, though in the  
 middle, and join with the public ones, for that is  
 better, and your Duty : and so go on with him in  
 Heart, till he have made an End. After which, you  
 will, in a short Ejaculation, ask of God the Forgive-  
 nesses of all your Coldness, Wandering, and Indiffer-  
 ence,

ence, or worser Thoughts, during the whole Performance: beseeching him to preserve in you a lively Sense of his infinite Mercies, shewn to Man in Christ Jesus; and that you may go home more and more confirmed in Virtue and holy Resolutions, and abide in his Favour to your Life's End.

*Par.* I thank you, Sir, for your Care in thus preparing and conducting me, from the Beginning of this solemn Performance to the End of it; and in particular for those Hints of Things, that to wiser People may appear little and needless, but to me useful, orderly, and tending to Edification, if I rightly observe them. When all is over, I suppose I shall return Home mighty well satisfied, full of Unction, Joy, and holy Consolations: assured of God's Favour, the Forgiveness of my Sins, and everlasting Happiness.

*Min.* It may be not: One may be in God's Favour, without being assured of it: One may have his Sins forgiven, without knowing or believing it; and one may be (in the Purpose of God) everlastingly happy in the World to come, and yet be miserable and depending here. These Things, I think, we have already spoken to, and agreed in them. In this you may be fully satisfied, that if you truly repent you of your Sins, they shall certainly be forgiven, and you shall certainly be happy; but that is in the World to come: and whether you shall have the Comfort of believing your Sins forgiven, at such a certain Time, *at* or *after* receiving the Sacrament, is not quite so sure: No such Joy or Consolation is annexed, by any Promise of God, to the worthy Reception of the Blessed Sacrament; the Benefits are indeed secured, by God's Promise, to the worthy Receiver, from whence that Joy may reasonably result; but the Party may, by some Indisposition of Mind, not be filled with it; but let me now advise you, not to expect or depend upon any such unusual Lightfulness or Consolations; but if they follow, it is well; if not, there is no Harm or Danger in the Want of them. Prepare yourself by true and sincere Repentance, and come with Faith, and as well disposed as you can, and leave the rest to God;

God; you will have the satisfaction of having done your Duty in the best Manner you could, and with that you must be content, for the rest is not in your Power. I have known many good People disconsolate upon this Occasion, by being disappointed of such Expectations as their own warm Imagination had only raised in them, without any Reason or Promise made on God's Part. They came away cold, and little affected from the Sacrament, and thought their Hearts must have been filled with devout Transports; and because of this, they fell into deep Concern, and believed they had not prepared themselves as they ought to have done; although, upon examining their Hearts, they could not justly charge themselves with any considerable Omissions or Negligence in that Work. And therefore, be not discouraged, if you find not that Content and Pleasure after your coming from the Sacrament, which you may hope and wish for before. Go on steadily in the Ways of Virtue, and do your Christian Duties constantly; and whether you feel the sensible Warmths and Comforts of Religion or no, yet you shall never want, at length, the just Reward of it; *those* depend upon Uncertainties, *these* upon God's Goodness and Truth, which cannot fail.

*Par.* How often, Sir, do you think it necessary for me to come to the Sacrament?

*Min.* No Body can answer that Question better than yourself: you must consider where you live and what Opportunities you have of doing it, and what Reasons you shall have not to communicate where you have Opportunity. But be not, however, very scrupulous in the Matter; do not think you offend God, if you do not lay hold of every Opportunity offered you by the Place you live in; nor think it sufficient, that you communicate thrice a Year (as the Law requires) when you may do it every first Sunday in the Month, according to the Custom of the City where you live. Fail not to observe the Law of the Land; and be sure to have Regard to the Custom of the Place; and think upon the Advantages of serving God, and coming to  
this



#### 44 *The Reasonable Communicant.*

this holy Ordinance, and then your Piety and Discretion will direct you how often you are to communicate. Let not *little* Occasions hinder you, nor *great* ones please you: do not look upon it as a frightful or dangerous Duty, but easy, safe, and beneficial. And I give you these Cautions now, that you may begin with right Apprehensions of the Matter; for the first Impressions generally last, and People go on and end, much as they enter on this Duty.

*Par.* I thank you, Sir, for this Warning and good Advice, which I will make the best Use I can of: But I wonder much to hear you tell me, that this is not a frightful or hazardous Duty, when the Communion Service is so full of dreadful and amazing Threatnings, that I have known both understanding and religious People much discouraged and perplexed by them. We are told in the *second* Exhortation, that “the Danger is great, if we receive unworthily, even eating and drinking our own Damnation.” And in the *first*, that—“to come unworthily, is but thereby to increase our Damnation;”—and that “the Devil will enter into us, and fill us full of all Iniquities, and bring us to Destruction both of Body and Soul.” There is hardly any Thing able to support a Man’s Spirit under such Apprehensions. I suppose these Things are all of them exactly true, and not Exaggerations: And if they be, I leave you to consider, whether a Man may not as well venture *not to come to the Sacrament*, as venture the Hazard of coming *unworthily*, and thereby increase his Damnation.

*Min.* Remember (what I have observed before) that to come *unworthily*, is to come without any Repentance or Sorrow for past Offences, and without any Resolution of Amendment for the future. And such a coming as this must necessarily increase a Man’s Damnation; because he does apparently despise his Saviour, and insult his holy Ordinance; the whole Design of which, and almost every Word of which, supposes Sorrow for his Sins past, and Purposes of Amendment for the Time to come. It is almost like a Jew’s coming to be baptized, who hates Christi-  
anity

anity in his Heart, and intends to affront that Sacrament, but comes to serve some secular Interest and End; Or, if he comes not with Contempt and Malice, yet he makes a most solemn Profession of a great many Promises, none of which he has any Design of keeping. Now such a one must certainly be in a worse Condition than if he had never been baptized; and his Baptism must certainly increase his Damnation. And must it not be the same with those who come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and there pretend most solemnly to repent and be sorry for their Sins past, and to vow all holy Obedience for the future, and yet do neither, but Purpose to continue in their grievous Sins? Or if they do not positively purpose to continue in their Sins, yet have they no Intention to leave them. Such coming must unavoidably increase Damnation; because here is a new and most provoking Sin, of mocking Christ's Ordinance, added to his old Impenitence. But truly I believe, as well as hope, that not one Sinner in a hundred thousand comes to the Sacrament without a general Repentance, and some sort of Resolution of forsaking his Sins, though it be faint, and loose, and ineffectual. And of such I know not how to conclude that they thereby increase their Damnation, any otherwise, than they, who, without coming to the Sacrament, make such kind of Resolutions frequently, and yet forget and break them, may be said also to increase their Damnation; since every new Sin does certainly add to our Misery, and more and more endangers our Souls. I will therefore yield to you, that to come *unworthily* is a greater Venture than to *stay away*; if by *unworthily* you mean a positive Intention not to leave your Sins, but still to continue in them. But if by *unworthily* you mean such a Repentance and Resolution of leaving Sin, as, though when it is made is hearty and sincere, yet afterwards proves ineffectual, then I will not yield, that to come *unworthily* is more dangerous than to *stay away*; because the breaking a good Resolution (not intended to be broken when it is made) is not a greater Offence, than not to make that

that Resolution, although you were obliged to make it. *Caius*, a great Squanderer, owed me an hundred Crowns; and upon my Demand, promised to pay that Sum at six Months end, according to his Obligation: the Day came, but not my Debtor: for though when he made that Promise he was in great Earnest, and seriously intended to take up and amend himself: yet he fell into his old loose Courses, and was thereby disabled from approving himself an honest Man. *Titius*, another Squanderer, as great as he, owed me the like Sum, under the like Obligation; but when I called upon him, made me no answer; affirming afterwards, that he would not promise, because he intended not to leave his ill Courses, which would certainly disable him from paying his Debt. Am I more obliged to *Titius* for not promising, because he intended not to perform, than to *Caius* for promising, and intending to perform, although he did not indeed perform? Do I owe him more Favour, who refuses to promise what he is in Reason obliged to promise, and in Justice to perform; than I owe to him, who promises in good Earnest, and intends at that Time to perform, though afterwards he forgets and fails? Put these two Men under equal Obligations, and equal Abilities of discharging them, and you will see to which of them most Kindness is owing from the Creditor; to promise with a Purpose of not paying, is to deceive me and abuse me; but to promise with a Purpose of paying, though he does not pay, is only to disappoint me: I say therefore (to make a short Application) that to come to the Sacrament with a general Sorrow and Concern for Sins past, and a general Resolution to live better for the Time to come, although Men afterward fall into Sin again, and forget their good Resolutions, is not a worse and more hazardous Thing than to stay away from the Sacrament, without any Repentance at all of past Sins, or any Resolutions of living better, but going on still in their old Course of Wickedness. If it were indeed a voluntary Thing, and left at Peoples Liberty, whether they would come to the Sacrament or stay away,

then



then it were safer not to come: But since it is a Duty laid upon Men by Christ's Command, and all Men are obliged to come by virtue of the Obedience they owe to their Saviour, I can see no Safety in refusing to come; and this refusing to qualify themselves and come, must as certainly increase their Damnation, as coming less qualified than they ought to be. I would not encourage any one to come *unworthily*, that is, without Repentance, without Resolutions of Amendment, without Faith, and without Charity; for certainly, such coming must be hazadous. But I can see as much Hazard in disobeying Christ, in refusing to come as he commands, because Men live (and still resolve to live) without Repentance, without Resolutions of Amendment without Faith, and without Charity. In a Word, there is no Safety but in Repentance and Obedience; both of which, by the Grace of God, are in every Christian's Power. And to that Grace I leave you; beseeching him, who is the Author of that and every other good and perfect Gift, to bestow them in such Measure on us all, that we may most religiously discharge both this and every other Christian Duty, in the Manner that we ought, to the Glory of his great Name, and the Salvation of all our Souls in the Day of our Lord Jesus.



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